

EDP WI WEEK 7th December

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Christmas is a busy time in any household and food plays an essential part in the celebrations. Over the Christmas period, we welcome others into our homes to enjoy festive foods and drinks and likewise, we find ourselves eating out with friends and family. Whilst for most of us this prospect is eagerly awaited and anticipated, for some there is more to consider than whether to serve the Christmas pudding with brandy butter or cream!

Whilst baking for the Royal Norfolk Show, earlier this year, I became increasingly mindful of the various allergies present in today's society. So, for those of us intending to entertain over the festive period, how can we ensure that every guest can enjoy Christmas fayre without any ill effects?

Take the traditional recipe for Christmas cake. This would usually contain: Butter, Sugar, Plain Flour, Salt, Eggs, Nutmeg, Cinnamon, Currants, Sultanas, Raisins, Glacé Cherries, Candied Peel, Orange, Walnuts, Almonds, Brandy.

For anyone following a diabetic diet, the only ingredient needed to be substituted is the sugar (white and brown), for which zero carb' varieties are commercially available and can be used in cooking exactly as sugar. The marzipan and royal icing used to decorate the traditional cake can be replaced by an arrangement of selected nuts and glacé fruits.

Considering Vegan options, again there are many alternatives in supermarkets in the 'Free From' section or specialist stores. Replacing the eggs with Chia seeds and the butter with coconut oil will produce a cake suitable for this diet.

Moving on to Gluten Free and Dairy Free requirements. Many foods are naturally gluten-free, therefore by replacing the flour in the recipe with a gluten-free variety and using a dairy-free margarine, the ingredients given above would be suitable for both dietary needs.

Obviously, many families will have their own traditional recipe to follow and these will vary in ingredients and ratios. However, I hope that I have illustrated that with a few substitutions it is possible to cater for most specialist diets so that the Christmas festivities can be enjoyed by us all.